

BELCHERTOWN, MASS.

1761



1911

One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary

HISTORICAL ADDRESS

BY

REV. PAYSON W. LYMAN

150th ANNIVERSARY
OF THE
Incorporation of the Town
OF
BELCHERTOWN
July 2, 3 and 4
1911
A Sketch of the Celebration
AND
THE HISTORICAL ADDRESS

BY
Rev. Payson W. Lyman

BELCHERTOWN, MASS.
PRESS OF LEWIS H. BLACKMER
1912

For the
Belcher



GOVERNOR BELCHER

Historical Sketch of the 150th Anniversary, July 2, 3 and 4, 1911

At the annual town meeting March 6, 1911, the town voted to observe the 150th Anniversary of its incorporation.

This occurred on June 30, 1911, but it was decided since that day so closely preceded the Fourth of July, to combine the Anniversary celebration with that of Independence Day. The town appropriated the sum of \$ 500.00 which was considerably increased by generous contributions by the several local organizations and by private individuals.

Invitations were sent to sons and daughters of Belchertown in 26 states and several foreign countries and a large number were present to participate in the celebration.

The following general committee was appointed by the town :

Wilbur T. Hale,	Merrick A. Morse,
Daniel D. Hazen,	James A. Peeso,
R. E. Fairchild,	Louis W. Dillon,
Harry A. Hopkins,	Herbert F. Curtis.

The Belchertown Historical Society appointed a committee on pageant which consisted of,

George H. B. Green,	Mrs. Gertrude Thomson,
Fred D. Walker.	

The Reception committee at the Library, Monday evening, July 3, consisted of the members of the General committee, the Selectmen, the Trustees of Clapp Memorial Library, and their wives.

MARSHAL OF PARADE, — Dwight F. Shumway,

TOWN CRIER, — Fred B. Purdy,

Program

SUNDAY, JULY 2.

10.45 A. M. Special services in the churches.

7.30 P. M. Congregational church.

Historical Address, Rev. Payson W. Lyman,
of Fall River.

MONDAY, JULY 3.

2.30 P. M. On the Common.

Address, Hon. Robert Luce.

8.00 P. M. Reception at Clapp Memorial Library.

TUESDAY, JULY 4.

10.00 A. M. Historical Pageant, On the Common.

EARLY PERIOD.

1. Arrival of Governor Belcher, 1735.

His Greeting by the Settlers.

2. Scenes of Indian Life.

Capture of Captain John Smith, and rescue by
Pocohontas.

Indian Dances.

NINETEENTH CENTURY DAYS.

1. Coming of Lafayette to Belchertown, 1825.

Welcome by the townspeople.

2. Reception to Lafayette.

11.00 A. M. Historical Parade.

3.00 P. M. Ball Game.

8.00 P. M. Grand Display of Fireworks.

Music by Turner's Falls Military Band all day and evening.

SUNDAY EVENING, JULY 2.

The Celebration of the 150th Anniversary began with the Historical Address by Rev. Payson W. Lyman, in the Congregational Church, at 7.30 P. M. The united choirs of the churches sang, led by Alvan R. Lewis.

MONDAY, JULY 3.

2.30 P. M. On the Common.

M. A. Morse introduced the speaker of the afternoon, Hon. Robert Luce of Somerville, who gave an appropriate address. A poem "Belchertown", written by Miss Abbie Snow, was read by Mrs. Wilbur T. Hale. There was singing by the pupils of the public schools led by Mrs. Lucy A. Gatchell.

In the evening at 8 o'clock, a largely attended and successful reception to past and present citizens of Belchertown was given at Clapp Memorial Library which was tastily decorated for the occasion. The grounds about the building were lighted with Chinese lanterns and from tables on the lawn ice cream was served after the exercises.

Rev. Wilbur T. Hale, chairman of the General Committee, presided. Master Willie Gilbert gave a recitation "My Country's Flag." The choir of the Methodist Church under the direction of Marcena M. Alden sang several selections, and Miss Blanche Upham of Palmer and Miss Carolyn Fiske of Boston sang solos. The Grange Orchestra played. An Anniversary poem written by Mrs. Susan Owen Coleman was read by Mrs. Thomas Allen of Montague. Poems written by Mrs. Elizabeth Smith Newton of Los Angeles, California, and W. O. Terry of East Brookfield, Mass., were also read. Interesting letters were received from Mrs. S. T. D. Robinson, widow of the great governor of Kansas, Mrs. Daniel L. Hazen of Los Angeles, and others.

TUESDAY, JULY 4.

The Historical Pageant at 10 o'clock was the crowning event of the celebration and will long be remembered by the

people of Belchertown.

The success of the exercises and the enjoyment manifested by every one were the more notable in view of the weather conditions. The first week in July was the hottest in the memory of the oldest inhabitant. In fact a hot wave extending all over the eastern part of the United States reached Belchertown. The temperature recorded July 4 at the Weather Bureau in Boston was the highest since its institution 40 years ago. It was 104 degrees in the shade in Belchertown on that day.

Notwithstanding the heat however, those participating in the Pageant acquitted themselves creditably.

Governor Belcher, impersonated by Daniel D. Hazen, was welcomed by the townspeople clad in the costume of Colonial Days. Edward R. Peeso made the address of welcome, which was well delivered and appropriately phrased, calling the executive's attention to the glories nature had given the precinct of "Cold Spring", and craving for the people the honor of naming it Belcher's town. Mr. Hazen made a fitting reply, part of his speech having been taken from an address actually made by Governor Belcher. Among those who participated in the reception to the governor which followed, was Frank Forward of South Hadley Falls, who wore the garb of an old time minister. This was especially appropriate as his great grandfather was Rev. Justus Forward, the second settled minister in Belchertown. This scene was presented by the members of Union Grange.

Fifty Indians led by Powhattan (Principal John V. Jewett of the High School) gave a very interesting exhibition.

General Lafayette (John W. Jackson) attended by his son and secretary, arrived in an old fashioned stage coach which was driven by Lewis Shumway of Ware, whose grandfather was one of the stage drivers when Cold Spring was merely a watering place for thirsty travellers. On the coach was the trumpeter to herald the approach of so important a personage. He was welcomed by the townspeople clad in the costume of the early 19th century. Edgar E. Sargent, as spokes-

man for the town welcomed Lafayette in an address of a historical nature and Mr. Jackson made an appropriate reply. At the reception which followed, a Minuet by Belchertown ladies, was a very pleasing feature. Those who participated were graceful and courtly in their curtsies and no feature of the Pageant excited more favorable comment.

These scenes were presented by Mt. Vernon Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star and Vernon Lodge of Masons.

In the Historical Parade at 11 o'clock, the different scenes of the Pageant were represented on floats. The Farmers' and Mechanics' Club had two excellent floats, showing old and new methods of agriculture. There were floats representing Cold Spring and Log Town; also one depicting an Indian scene presented by citizens of Enfield, which together with Belchertown was a part of the "Equivalent Lands." There were also other pleasing features in the parade including the "Vehicle Light Bill."

In the evening there was a beautiful display of fireworks on the grounds of Fred D. Walker. The more comfortable weather of the evening permitted a large attendance. At the same time there was a concert by the Band. The display closed with a set piece, "the 150th Anniversary of Belchertown", and the celebration was a matter of history.

WILBUR T. HALE.

HISTORICAL ADDRESS

BY

Reverend Payson W. Lyman

A STORY OF BEGINNINGS

It is impossible, within the compass of an evening's address on so great a theme, to say all one might wish to say. The embarrassment is not so much to find what to say as to determine what to leave unsaid.

This town was settled during a lull in that great struggle for continental supremacy which the English and French had waged and which had made several generations of New Englanders familiar with the arts of warfare, especially with the anxieties and horrors of the savage border foray and with the forest strategy which such an enmity made necessary.

The fourth Indian war continued from 1722 to 1726 and was known as "Father Ralle's War" from the name of its leading Jesuit instigator. It was brought on by the pushing of English settlements up the deep bays and rivers of Maine. The brunt of it Massachusetts bore. Behind the Indians were the French of Canada encouraged by the French King. This war brought the Indians down the Connecticut Valley and people were slain, wounded or taken captive at Northfield, Deerfield, Hatfield, Northampton and Westfield. At this time there were only twelve towns in the valley portion of our state including Brookfield, Brimfield and Suffield, the latter then under Mass-

achusetts jurisdiction as one of the towns of Old Hampshire.

After this war the colonists enjoyed an interval of 18 years peace until the outbreak of the fifth Indian war known as the French and Indian war in 1744.

During this period of peace many new towns were planted, including Belchertown.

The territory of Belchertown was a part of the so-called "equivalent lands." The line between Massachusetts and Connecticut, especially the Connecticut Valley portion, was long in dispute. Settlements in Suffield, Enfield, Somers and Woodstock, now in Connecticut, were then under the jurisdiction of Massachusetts and were protected by our state during the Indian wars.

Adhering to a wrong south line which was run in 1642 and crossed the Connecticut River several miles too far south, Massachusetts granted to these and other towns and to individuals, 105,793 acres of land. After a long controversy it was agreed in 1713 that Massachusetts might retain jurisdiction of these towns, if she would give to Connecticut the same number of acres of her public lands as an "equivalent".

In 1715 two men from Connecticut and one from Massachusetts, acting as a commission, laid out for Connecticut 51,850 acres east of Hadley, now Belchertown and Pelham, 10,000 in Ware, and 43,943 on the river above Brattleboro, over which Massachusetts then held jurisdiction. In April 1716, the agents of Connecticut sold this territory in 16 shares at auction for 683 pounds, or a little more than a penny and a half an acre. In his history of Hadley, Sylvester Judd records that there was much buying and selling of the "equivalent lands" at Cold Spring. He says that in 1722 twelve men, seven of them Northampton farmers, bought 8400 acres at Cold Spring at 3 shillings per acre, in bills, or at about 25 cents in real value.

Our historian, Hon. Mark Doolittle, says that in 1727 Connecticut sold its right to the territory now Belchertown to seven persons residing in or near Boston, in 6 equal divisions, the fifth to Jonathan Belcher. During October and November

1727, Col. Timothy Dwight of Northampton surveyed and plotted the territory. His lines included 27,390 acres.

Up to this time there had been no permanent settlements here. Men from Hadley, Hatfield and Northampton had been accustomed to drive herds of cattle for summer pasturage in this region. Men came hither to box the pine trees for turpentine. Candlewood, i. e. pitch pine knots from fallen trees, abounded here and people from the river towns came to collect it for lighting their dwellings at night.

The men who owned the land, in order to promote its settlement offered to give homesteads to men who would settle thereon.

At that time there was no settlement between Brookfield and Hadley,

This settlement got its original name, Cold Spring, from the spring on what you know as the Bartlett farm in the Cold Spring school district, a spring from whose bounteous outflow of cold water, travelers between the Bay and the river settlements often refreshed themselves and their horses.

Sylvester Judd records that Aaron Lyman was a licensed innholder at Cold Spring in 1728, the year after the sale of the lands plotted by Col. Dwight. The Aaron Lyman homestead included Cold Spring and there he entertained travelers. The offer of homesteads was accepted by Aaron Lyman, Benjamin Stebbins and Samuel Bascom of Northampton, and John Bardwell and Jonathan Graves of Hatfield, who according to Doolittle, removed hither in July 1731. By 1737 there were 20 families here and in that year it is supposed they organized a church. On a petition of Capt. Caleb Lyman, on behalf of the inhabitants of the tract of land commonly called Cold Spring Plantation, praying that they may be enabled to assess a tax of three pence per acre per annum, on all the lands there, for the building of a meeting house and settling and supporting an orthodox minister, it was ordered by the General Court, Jan. 6, 1738, that the prayer of the petitioner be granted and that John Smith, a principal inhabitant be allowed and empow-

ered to assemble and convene the inhabitants there at some suitable place to choose assessors to levy the tax and to choose a committee to take care of building a meeting house, which house shall be set on such place as shall be agreed upon by a major vote of the proprietors at a meeting to be appointed for that purpose, "the vote of each proprietor to be reckoned according to his respective interest". The petition thus favorably acted upon stated that they had twenty families and expected more soon. Under the authority thus granted, a meeting house was raised and covered in, though not finished till 1746. In the autumn of this year, 1738, when the General Court assembled, it received a petition from Ebenezer Bridgman and others, inhabitants of the plantation called Cold Spring, praying that they may be vested with the powers and privileges of a township for the better support of their minister and the more regular management of their other affairs. Thus the religious motive was foremost in their desire for incorporation.

On Jan. 25, 1739, it was ordered that this prayer be "so far granted as that Mr. Aaron Lyman be, and is hereby, fully authorized to notify and warn the inhabitants and residents of said tract of land qualified by law to vote in town affairs, to convene as soon as may be in some public place to choose town officers and to agree upon some proper method for the calling and settling a minister and making provision for his support".

Acting under this authority, the people met and voted a call to Rev. Edward Billing, a native of that part of Hadley now known as Saunderton, which call Mr. Billing accepted in a letter dated Feb. 22, 1739. The first deacons of the church were John Smith and Aaron Lyman, and they held their offices respectively 40 and 43 years. They, with Samuel Bascom, Stephen Crawford (probably Crawford) and Jonathan Graves were chosen a committee to act with Mr. Billing in calling a council for his ordination, which event is supposed to have taken place in the April succeeding the call—i. e. 1739.

In a petition to the General Court dated November 1740, the petitioners say that they are greatly in debt for building a

meeting house, outside covered and glazed, and a minister settled. They are still but 20 families. They are in debt for land for their minister's settlement and to him also for his salary. They say in support of their petition for a land tax on non-resident proprietors,—“we have sustained preaching for five or six years and have advanced the estates of the proprietors more than our own by settling Cold Spring”.

The pastorate of Edward Billing whose wife was a sister of Rev. David Parsons, the first minister of Amherst, continued till April, 1752, i. e. 13 years. During this time the settlement had grown to fifty or more families.

The cause of the rupture of this pastoral relationship was a disagreement between pastor and people as to the qualifications for church membership. The church believed in what was then called the half-way covenant—i. e. that confessedly unregenerate persons, of reputable lives might have their children baptized and have voting power in church affairs. Mr. Billing opposed this view. He was a friend of the great theologian, Jonathan Edwards of Northampton, whom Erskine called “the greatest of the sons of men.” It was this same difference that caused the disruption of the Edwards pastorate in Northampton, June 22, 1750.

In the Edwards crisis in Northampton on this issue, Mr. Billing and his church played an important part. Each party in Northampton chose half the churches. The church in Cold Spring was one of those chosen by Mr. Edwards. The church refused to accept the invitation. But Mr. Billing went to Northampton on his own responsibility and was accepted by the council itself as a member. But, as he had no delegate, the Edwards party in the council was left in a minority of one. Consequently the council, by a majority of one, voted the dismissal of Mr. Edwards. Had the Cold Spring Church sent a delegate, in sympathy with the Edwardean view of its pastor, the council would have been tied, and Mr. Edwards would not have been dismissed. Deacon Aaron Lyman's brother, Benjamin, my ancestor, was one of some 20, or less than one in ten,

in the Northampton church, to vote against the dismissal of Mr. Edwards.

The consequence of this transaction was trouble between Mr. Billing and his church. Several councils were held in the hope to compose these differences; but finally the pastorate, which had been expected to be for life, was terminated by a council held in April, 1752.

Mr. Billing was shortly after called to become the first pastor of the first church in Greenfield. There he died within about 5 years, probably in 1757.

This was an unhappy end of the first pastorate of this church and people, but it was the result of a contention on a vital point in church order, and the churches of New England later came to hold, and act upon, the Edwardean view, which Mr. Billing upheld.

The great Commoner,—“The Morning Star of the Revolution”, Major Joseph Hawley of Northampton, a bitter and leading opponent of Mr. Edwards, afterwards most humbly confessed his grave error in that course. In his confession he speaks of attending a council at Cold Spring involving this issue where he had hoped in vain for an opportunity to confess his error. But the heated controversy among the people there did not allow it.

After the dismissal of Mr. Billing, the people remained pastorless three years and ten months, meanwhile, however, maintaining preaching services and the church ordinances. At length, at a precinct meeting held June 9, 1756, the church unanimously voted a call to Justice Forward, a native of Suffield, Conn., and a Yale graduate, who had studied theology with Rev. Timothy Woodbridge of Hatfield, to the pastorate.

Mr. Forward's letter of acceptance was dated June 29, “at my lodgings in Cold Spring” and is addressed “to the church of Christ in the township of Cold Spring and to the inhabitants of said town”.

You will notice that thus in 1756, five years before the act of incorporation, which we celebrate, Mr. Forward the pastor-

Justice

elect, speaks of the "township" of Cold Spring.

Mr. Forward's ordination took place Feb. 25, 1756 in the 26th year of his age. He thus became the pastor of 60 families and of some 300 persons. He was settled for life, and continued the only pastor of all the people for 56 years. The last three years of his life he had a colleague,—Rev. Experience Porter. Mr. Forward died March 8, 1814, in the 59th year of his ministry to this people. This was the year that saw the close of the second war with Great Britain. During this time he had followed to their graves more than 900 of his people. He had received to the church 380 members, 284 of them on confession of faith. Thus he was pastor during more than one third of the life of this church up to this date.

We have noted that in accepting his call in 1756, Mr. Forward spoke of "the township of Cold Spring". But it was not yet a town in the full sense of the term. It was a "precinct" so-called, with practically the right of local self-government, both in civil and ecclesiastical affairs. Why full township rights were not given, is told us by Dr. Josiah Gilbert Holland—one of the great gifts of this community to the world,—in his history of Western Massachusetts. He says: "Before 1753 the governor of Massachusetts received instructions from the home-government which, in a strong light, exhibited the growing jealousy of the crown of the popular element in the government of this colony. The increase in the number of the towns, increasing in the same ratio the representation in the legislature, was seen to present formidable encroachment upon the authority of the parent power. To put a stop to this, the governor was instructed to consent to no act for establishing a new town, with the right of representation, for many years. As a substitute, districts were incorporated with the full privilege of towns, except representation." It will be seen that even in the act of incorporation, which we celebrate, this right was denied.

You must note that ministers were called, their salaries determined and paid by the town or district, in its corporate capacity. The motive to the organization of the town was often ex-

pressly stated to be that so they might be able the better to provide for themselves the institutions of religion. This was true in this community. The records of the doings of the inhabitants of Cold Spring in their precinct meetings during 20 years next after 1741 till the full incorporation, show that almost 70 meetings were held under warrants containing over 700 distinct articles and that more than half of these articles, exclusive of those relating to the organization of the meetings, related to their ecclesiastical councils. As Mr. Doolittle, the town's historian, puts it: "A prompt, persevering and ever-wakeful vigilance to sustain the great truths of the Bible in doctrines and duty and to give them efficiency in life was, in their view, the only condition on which blessings could be expected." And that ought to be the view of their children from generation to generation.

The time finally came when the people of Cold Spring became urgent for full incorporation. At a precinct meeting held Dec. 29, 1760, a committee was appointed to present a petition to the General Court for an act of incorporation as a town. For brevity's sake, omitting the address, the petition was as follows:—"Elijah Smith and Jonathan Bardwell, both of the place called Cold Spring in the County of Hampshire, a committee appointed by the inhabitants of the same at their meeting held there for this purpose, as by a copy of their vote then passed will appear, humbly show:

"That the said place has for many years been inhabited and settled by a considerable body of the good subjects of our sovereign Lord and King and that the Freeholders and other inhabitants there now amount to about the number of 45 families: that the said plantation, not being incorporated into a town or district now do and ever have labored under many of the difficulties and inconveniences respecting their public affairs, such as the repairing of highways, building bridges, and that necessarily attend the state of things they are in, whereby they are rendered as a body less useful to the community of which they are a part than otherwise they might be and would choose to be.

“ To remove such inconveniences, and obtain the privilege to which the said plantation apprehend they have, in common with others His Majesty’s liege subjects in this province conveniently situated therefor, a good right. Your memorialists on this behalf, humbly supplicate your excellency and honors to incorporate the proprietors and inhabitants of said place into a town, by some proper means, and with certain bounds and vest the same with all those powers, privileges and immunities which by law, towns in this province have and ought to have. And as in duty bound will ever pray. Cold Spring, March 28, 1761, signed by Elijah Smith and Johnathan Bardwell, Committee. ”

The petition now in the archives of the Commonwealth bears the following endorsements.—

“ In the House of Representatives April 3, 1761—Read and ordered that Mr. Belcher and Mr. Foster with such as the Honorable Board shall give, be a committee to consider and report what may be proper for the committee to do upon the petition.

Sent up for concurrence. James Otis, Speaker.

In council, April 3, 1761. Read and concurred. John Hill, Esq., is joined in the affair. A. Oliver, Secretary. ”

Such the petition. Now the act of incorporation which is chapter 7 of the acts of 1761.

“ An Act for incorporating the plantation called Cold Spring into a town by the name of Belcher’s Town.

“ Whereas the inhabitants of the plantation of Cold Spring, lying in the County of Hampshire, labor under many difficulties and inconveniences, by means of their not being a town.

“ Therefore, Be it enacted by the Governor, Council and House of Representatives that the said plantation, commonly called and known by the name of Cold Spring, bounding easterly on Swift river, south on Swift river partly, and partly on Palmer, westerly partly on Springfield and partly on Hadley and north on Pelham, be and hereby is, erected into a town by the name of Belcher’s Town, and that the said town be, and hereby is, invested with all the powers, privileges and immuni-

ties that any of the towns of this province do, or may, enjoy, that of choosing and sending a representative to the General Court only excepted.

“ And be it further enacted that Eleazer Porter, Esq. be, and hereby is, empowered to issue his warrant to some principal inhabitant in the said plantation requiring him, in His Majesty’s name, to warn and notify the said inhabitants qualified to vote in town affairs, that they meet together at such time and place in said plantation as, by said warrant, may be appointed, to choose such officers as may be necessary, to manage the affairs of the said town. And the inhabitants, being so met, shall be, and hereby are, empowered to choose said officers accordingly.”

The parchment on which the act was engrossed bears the following endorsements :—

June 25, 1761—“ This bill, having been read three several times in the house of Representatives, passed to be enacted.”

James Otis, Speaker.

June 26, 1761—“ This bill, having been read three several times in Council, passed to be enacted.”

June 30, 1761—By the Governor. “ I consent to the enacting this bill.” Francis Bernard.

Andrew Oliver, the secretary, was brother in law of Hutchinson, a later royalist governor.

Bernard, the governor, had just come from the governorship of New Jersey in which he had succeeded Belcher. Of his administration, Barber, in his *History of New England*, says; “ His Measures were at first popular, but he soon rendered himself extremely odious by his zeal to sustain the British ministry in their encroachments on the rights of the people. He appointed Mr. Hutchinson instead of Mr. Otis to the office of chief justice, in opposition to the wishes of the people,—favored the introduction of troops into Boston for the purpose of constraining obedience to the arbitrary acts of parliament.” The first meeting under the authority thus conferred was held September 30, 1761. In the absence of definite census record, Mr. Doolittle estimates that the population at the time of the incorporation

was about 560.

As the act of incorporation shows, the new name of this place was Belcher's Town,—written in the act as two words. At the time of the incorporation, Governor Belcher had been dead three years. But he was Governor of Massachusetts and New Hampshire when the first settlement here was effected and he was one of the owners of the territory. He was born in Cambridge, graduated at Harvard, became a Boston merchant, was chosen a member of the council and in 1729 went as agent of Massachusetts Bay colony to England. While he was there, Governor Burnett died, and Belcher was appointed Governor. Of him and of this appointment, George Lowell Austin, in his *History of Massachusetts*, says : — “ Mr. Jonathan Belcher, a young man of pleasing address, was still in England when the tidings of Burnett's death arrived. Fired with ambition, and supported by Shute and other of his friends, he applied for the Governorship and obtained it. One reason why he was thus chosen was that no one else, possessing the ability, could be found in the kingdom to accept the appointment and further more it was thought that he, being popular among his own countrymen, would be the better able to arrange the unsettled state of affairs.

On reaching Boston from England, Governor Belcher communicated his instructions to the Assembly. “ In case of the refusal of the House to comply with these instructions,” he said, “ His Majesty will find himself under a necessity of laying the undutiful behavior of the provinces before the legislature of Great Britain, not only in this single instance, but in many others of the same nature and tendency, whereby it manifestly appears that this Assembly for some years last past, has attempted by unwarrantable practices to weaken, if not to cast off, the obedience they owe to the Crown, and the dependence which all colonies ought to have on their Mother country. ”

Thus the revolution seemed to have been brewing for some years before 1731. As in duty bound, Belcher, as the King's appointee, sought to stem the tide. But the last part of his ad-

ministration of 11 years was marked by an endless series of pecuniary difficulties.

"By his steady opposition to the current schemes of the provinces" says Austin, "Governor Belcher gradually became unpopular. Even his friends in England were prejudiced against him and united with his enemies at home in seeking his removal. At length his administration came to an end in 1741. His integrity which had been impeached, was vindicated in England, and six years later he received an appointment as Governor of New Jersey. He was one of the most elegant gentlemen of his time in manners and appearance, a native of New England, one of Harvard College's special friends, and a great favorite with all with whom he associated. Taken all in all, he was as amiable, generous and noble hearted a man as any of whom the provinces could boast."

He was governor of New Jersey from 1747 to 1757. Thus his public career covered most of the time which I have thus far described, from the settlement of "Belcher's Town" up to its incorporation with his name.

But neither Belcher nor any other royal governor proved able to stem the tide of colonial resistance to royal oppression.

In their petition for incorporation, as we have seen, the settlers here profess themselves "the Good Subjects of our Lord and King"; yet the fires of resistance to royal oppression were burning here as brightly as anywhere.

It is a distress to me that the time does not permit me to rehearse what my studies would enable me to tell you of the part Belcher's Town took in throwing off the yoke of Great Britain. But some of you have in print what I have written on this subject. It would be a great pleasure to dwell more at length than the time allows on their preparation for the call to arms, and on their prompt and energetic response when the call at length came. I should like to tell of the County Convention held in Northampton, September 22, 23, 1774, "to consult upon measures to be taken in this time of general distress in the provinces occasioned by the late attacks of the British

ministry upon the said province. ” Our members of that momentous convention were Col. Caleb Clark, Joseph Smith and Nathaniel Dwight. I wish I could tell of their assembly at their meeting house November 7, 1774, to organize a military company of which they elected Caleb Clark Captain, Joseph Graves, first Lieut., John Cowles second Lieut., Elijah Dwight Ensign, and Oliver Bridgman Clerk, and of their order to lay in a stock of ammunition to be placed in the hands of Elijah Dwight, of Captain Zachariah Eddy’s long drive to Providence for a supply of powder for the town’s use, of their extreme promptness in honoring the tax requisition of the Provincial Congress, of Captain Samuel Howe’s and Captain Nathaniel Dwight’s membership of that body in successive sessions.

I should like to tell of their meeting in the church, presided over by Deacon Aaron Lyman, when the men voted unanimously, that if the Continental Congress should issue a Declaration of Independence, they were ready to defend such declaration with their lives, their fortune and their sacred honor. I should like to speak of the leading men, as indicated by membership in the successive committees of Correspondence and and Safety,— Such men as Col. Caleb Clark, Capts. Nathaniel Dwight, Samuel Howe, Josiah Lyman, John Cowles, Jonathan Bardwell and Zachariah Eddy. Lieuts. Nathan Kingsley, Joseph Graves and James Walker, Deacons Daniel and Joseph Smith, Israel Cowles, Oliver Bridgman, Ebenezer Warner and Moses Hannum.

Thus on the alert, the men of Belcher’s Town were ready for the call to arms when the conflict was precipitated by the collision at Concord Bridge and Lexington Green. On the next day two companies of Minute Men marched from the town. One of thirty-five men under Capt. Jonathan Bardwell and Lieuts. Aaron Phelps and Silvanus Howe, the other under Capt. John Cowles and Lieuts. Asahel Smith and Eleazer Warner. Both of these captains with most of their command were in the service about Boston till August 1. Of the experiences of this period Bancroft thus speaks : “ The existence of the ar-

my was an indication of the benevolence of the New England people, and its sustenance during May, June and July cannot be accounted for by ordinary rules. There was nothing regularly established, and yet many thousands of men were supplied. Touched by an all-pervading influence each householder esteemed himself a sort of commissary. There were no public magazines, no large dealers in provisions, but the wants of the army rung in the ears of the farmers, and from every cellar, barnyard and field throughout Worcester, Hampshire and even Berkshire, such articles of food as could be spared were devoted to the camp, and everybody's wagons were used to transport them. But for this, the forces must have dispersed. How it was done, cannot exactly be told; popular enthusiasm keeps little record of its sacrifices; only it was done, and the troops of Massachusetts and New Hampshire were fed without so much as a barrel of flour from the Continental Congress." No doubt the farmers of Belcher's Town did their share in this service, as they did in supplying soldiers all through the long and bloody struggle for national independence. Often they were in advance of the demands upon them in furnishing soldiers for the Continental Armies.

In the winter following Lexington and Bunker Hill, Capt. Elijah Dwight with sixty-one men did garrison duty in the investment of Boston with the regiment of Col. Woodbridge.

One of Arnold's Captains in his terrible expedition across the wilds of Maine during this winter, in aid of Montgomery about Quebec, was Elihu Lyman, son of Deacon Aaron Lyman of Belchertown, who afterwards attained the rank of Major and, I think, was with General Shephard when he repelled the assault of ^{the} ~~Shay's~~ rebels on the Arsenal at Springfield. When, after the defeat of Arnold and the fall of Montgomery before Quebec, it became necessary to reinforce our army in Canada, Colonel Elisha Porter of Hadley was commissioned to raise a Hampshire regiment for that service. One of his captains was Josiah Lyman, who, with his Lieutenant James Walker, led the Belchertown company in what was about the most severe

expedition of the war. The regiment started March 22, 1776, went to Ticonderoga, thence up Lake Champlain, and down the St. Lawrence to Quebec. This service was so extraordinarily hard that the town credited these men with two months for each month they actually served. Captain Lyman was Major of Colonel Nathan Tyler's regiment, which served in Rhode Island from May 1, 1779 through that year. Colonel Porter retained his command in the Northern Army until its operations were crowned by the capture of Burgoyne in Oct. 1777. When any special emergency arose, troops for a brief service were recruited throughout the state. We find, e. g., that Lieutenants Aaron Phelps and James Walker were at the head of a company in Colonel Porter's regiment which contained 27 Belchertown men. In the next month, Captain Jonathan Bardwell with Lieutenants James Walker and Henry Dwight led 51 men from the town for a month's service with Porter's regiment just before the capture of Burgoyne. Among the privates of this company, were such men as Josiah Lyman, John Cowles, Daniel Smith and Moses Howe, who had each led soldiers in previous campaigns. Captain Elijah Dwight and Lieutenant David Barton led a company of Belchertown men in Colonel Porter's regiment for six weeks' service in New London in 1779. Repeated levies for the Continental Army were responded to. Every year brought to the burdened people fresh calls for troops, and every year saw the departure of troops for months or for years, as the case might be.

Besides those already named, mention should be made of Major Nathan Parsons, brother of the wife of Edward Billing, Belchertown's first pastor, and brother of Rev. David Parsons the first minister of Amherst. The wife of Major Parsons was a grand-daughter of Captain Nathaniel Dwight. Major Parsons was in the war from its beginning to its end. He was at Bunker Hill, at Burgoyne's surrender, and with Washington at Morristown.

Dr. Estes Howe, son of Colonel Samuel Howe and son-in-law of Captain Nathaniel Dwight, was a drummer boy in his

father's company at Lake George in 1759, was surgeon in Col. David Brewer's regiment from April to December 1775, and surgeon in Colonel Rufus Putnam's regiment from January 1, 1777 to May 1, 1779, including the campaign which culminated in the battle of Saratoga and the capture of Burgoyne. He was on the staff of the successful commander, General Horatio Gates. He was Belchertown's first physician, and practised here 50 years. For two years before his death, he was disabled by paralysis. In June 1825 the then venerable General Lafayette was passing through Belchertown on the way from Albany to Boston. On being told that there lay sick in a house near by, an old officer of the Army of Saratoga, he ordered his carriage to stop, and went in to greet the disabled veteran. Another Belchertown officer was Captain Joel Green, who led a company in Col. Ezra Wood's regiment at Peekskill and White Plains in 1778. He was adjutant of Colonel Jonathan Warner's regiment of Lexington Minute Men. In the town's rolls he is credited with more service than almost any other man.

The following named Revolutionary soldiers died in the service according to a private record kept by Rev. Justus Forward. Stephen Ayers, Asa Davis and Jonathan Olds died in Roxbury, and Samuel Belknap in Cambridge in 1775. Reuben Heath died in the Army in December 1775. David Bridges, like many of his fellow campaigners about Quebec in the spring of 1776, contracted small pox and died from it. His son, David Bridges, Jr., died at Crown Point later in the retreat. Jonathan Hulet, Simeon Phelps and Reuben Skinner died the same season in the Northern Army, near Ticonderoga. Ebenezer Gould Parsons, a boy of 13, waiter to his brother, Major Nathan Parsons, then adjutant of Colonel Marshall's regiment, died at Albany in 1777. Benjamin Squire and Jeremiah Pike, a soldier at White Plains, also died that year. Oliver Williams, who was a soldier at Bennington, and Jonathan Olds died in 1780. In October 1781 Salmon Kentfield Jr. died of small pox at the head of Elk River. In 1782 James Sawin died in the service. The only Belchertown Revolutionary sol-

dier killed in battle so far as now known was William Harrington who was killed in September 1781 in the final battle of the war at Yorktown, which resulted in the capture of Cornwallis.

"Inquire, I pray thee, of the former age and apply thyself to that which thy fathers searched out. Shall not they teach thee and tell thee?" History, it has been well said, is philosophy teaching by example. Nothing is gained by ignoring the lessons of the past, by disregarding the teachings of experience, by scouting the fathers as men whose wisdom we have outgrown, and the lessons of whose life and thought we may well enough neglect. In their time there was just as great heroism, just as great energy displayed, just as great wisdom manifested, as is seen in our day. The fathers of this nation, the founders of this Republic, the Pilgrim fathers, the early statesmen, the pastors of the colonial churches, the college builders, the Indian fighters, they who subdued the wilderness were as virile, as heroic, as consecrated as any of those of later time. They endured for conscience sake. They came hither to build a better nation than that into which they were born, to establish a freer church, to plant institutions which should furnish the mould for the life of a great and free people.

They had, it is true, no steam engines, no locomotives, no electric motors, no illuminating gas, no electric lights, no telegraphs, or telephones, no wireless transmission of intelligence, no aeroplanes, no such tremendous steamships as now plough the seas, no such frightfully effective enginery of war as the inventors and scholars of modern times have developed. But their lives were as great and glorious as are any which we now see. They were thinkers and debaters. They saw perhaps as near to the throne of God as we do. At all events, they were as loyal to what they did see as we are.

History is one of the studies which should by no means be neglected. He writes himself down as a man of small mind who scouts it as of little account. All great achievements of the present and of future time must be laid on the foundation of the studies, the discoveries and the experiences of the past.

“ Inquire I pray thee, of the former age, and apply thyself to that which thy fathers searched out. Shall not they teach thee and tell thee? ”

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 077 087 5